

REMARKS

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's thorough review of the present application, and respectfully request reconsideration in light of the preceding amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 6-8, 10, and 12-28 are pending in the application. Claim 17 has been rewritten in independent form including all limitations of claims 6 and 14. Independent claims 6 and 8 have been amended to better define the claimed invention. New claim 28 has been added to provide Applicants with the scope of protection to which they are believed entitled. No new matter has been introduced through the foregoing amendments.

The Examiner's withdrawal of the previously applied art in favor of newly discovered and applied U.S. Patent No. 4,790,838 to *Pigneul* and U.S. Patent No. 3,749,627 to *Jones* is noted. Basically, the Examiner argued that it would have been obvious to modify the grooves 40, 42 in FIG. 1 of *Pigneul* with the reservoirs 9 in FIGs. 3-4 of *Jones* to arrive at the claimed invention.

Jones discloses two relevant embodiments in FIGs. 3-4. The reference is silent as to whether in the embodiment of FIG. 3 the fibrous density in region 16 is less than in region 15 or not. It appears that the fibrous density in regions 15, 16 of *Jones* is the same. It should be noted that the cutting disclosed in column 5, lines 17-40 relied upon by the Examiner cannot result in any change in density of the tissue paper being cut. Thus, the embodiment disclosed in FIG. 3 of *Jones* fails to disclose, teach or suggest the claimed feature that "a density of the fibrous component in the indented regions is lower than in the central and side regions."

In the embodiment of FIG. 4, *Jones* discloses a reservoir having a tissue-paper-free bottom. This means, (i) the fibrous density at the bottom is zero or (ii) the fibrous component of the tissue paper is absent at the bottom of the reservoir 9. Independent claims 8 and 6 have amended to

distinguish over *Pigneul* in view of *Jones*, requiring that (i) the fibrous density in the indented regions be **non-zero** and (ii) the core contain **a fibrous component in the indented region**.

Thus, assuming *arguendo* that the applied references were combinable in the manner the Examiner proposed, the combined article would still fail to teach or disclose all limitations of the amended independent claims.

Claims 7, 10, 12-16 and 18-27 depend from claim 6 or 8, and are considered patentable at least for the reason advanced with respect to the amended independent claims. Claims 7, 10, 12-16 and 18-27 are also patentable on their own merits since these claims recite other features of the invention neither disclosed, taught nor suggested by the applied art.

For example, as to claim 10, the applied references, especially *Jones*, clearly fail to disclose, teach or suggest the claimed feature that “**said indented regions are devoid of said super-absorptive polymer particles.**” In the FIG. 3 embodiment of *Jones*, contrary to the Examiner’s allegation, there is no teaching or suggestion of the distribution of super-absorptive polymer particles, if any, in regions 15, 16. It appears that the distribution of super-absorptive polymer particles, if any, is the same in regions 15 and 16.

As to claims 16, 17, 20 and 21 the Examiner’s allegation of obvious matter of design choice is traversed as being evidentially unsupported. At least it is unclear from the current records whether the claimed features were known prior to the present invention or not. Applicants respectfully request that a reference or references of good date be cited in support of the Examiner’s allegation or the allegation be withdrawn.

As to claim 19, the applied references, especially *Pigneul*, clearly fail to disclose, teach or suggest the claimed feature that said **topsheet spans over the openings** of the indentations without being partially received within spaces defined by the side walls and bottoms of the indentations. FIG. 2 of *Pigneul* shows the topsheet being received in the groove 8. The portion of topsheet

illustrated to be above groove 8 in FIG. 2 is actually behind, not above, the groove, i.e., in the region near the right reference numeral II.

As to claim 22, the applied references, especially *Pigneul*, clearly fail to disclose, teach or suggest the claimed feature that the central and side regions of said core have substantially the **same thickness**. The central region 8 in FIG. 2 of *Pigneul* is apparently thinner than the side regions 2.

Likewise, as to claim 27, the applied references, especially *Pigneul*, clearly fail to disclose, teach or suggest the claimed feature that a minimum thickness of said core in said central region is **not lower** than a maximum thickness of said core in the indented regions and side regions. In FIG. 2 of *Pigneul*, the minimum thickness of the core in central region 8 is lower than the maximum thickness of the core in the side regions 2.

Independent claim 17 is patentable over the applied references because the reference clearly fail to disclose, teach or suggest the claimed feature that a depth of at least one of the grooves **gradually decreases** from the longitudinally middle point of the respective line toward the longitudinally opposite ends thereof. The Examiner is respectfully requested to produce evidence showing that the feature of claim 17 was known in the art prior to the present invention, or to withdraw the obviousness rejection of claim 17.

Claim 28 depends from claim 17 and is patentable over the art for the same reason. Claim 28 is also patentable for the reason advanced with respect to amended claim 6.

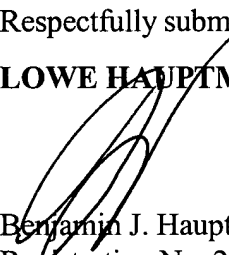
Each of the Examiner's rejections has been traversed/overcome. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that all claims are now in condition for allowance. Early and favorable indication of allowance is courteously solicited.

The Examiner is kindly asked to telephone the undersigned to schedule an Interview as requested in the Interview Request filed April 15, 2004.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 07-1337 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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